DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 847 EA 013 742

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TITLE Teacher and Staff Attendance Improvement Programs: Attendance Improvement Guide for Superintendents. How to Improve Staff Illness Absence.
PUB DATE Jun 79
NOTE 28p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (113th, Atlanta, GA, February 13-16, 1981). Not available in paper copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Data Analysis; Data Collection; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; Leaves of Absence; *Teacher Attendance
IDENTIFIERS *Attendance Improvement Plan; New Jersey; Staff Attendance

ABSTRACT

A successful program to improve personnel attendance has reduced sick leave in 40 New Jersey school districts without increasing dismissals, grievances, or costs. The author describes the five steps in this Attendance Improvement Program (AIP), including (1) analysis of data on staff absences due to illness; (2) preparation of operating guidelines for administering the AIP; (3) consultation with medical, legal, and labor-relations specialists; (4) development of an action plan to begin the AIP; and (5) implementation of the plan. They append suggested policy and guideline statements; data forms; absence forms for individuals, schools, and districts; and suggestions for recognition of good attendance through newsletters or personal communications. The paper also discusses management's role in causing staff absence and the reasons why a district should have an attendance improvement plan. (PW)

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February 5, 1981

NAME OF PRESENTER: RICHARD HARCLERODE
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TITLE OF PRESENTATION: "TEACHER AND STAFF ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS"

DATE AND TIME OF PRESENTATION: SAT. FEBRUARY 14, 1981
1 - 2 p.m.

EA 013 742

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A GROUP OF NEW JERSEY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE:
GREATER NEWARK, HUDSON COUNTY, EASTERN UNION COUNTY MERCER COUNTY AND NEW JERSEY STATE
RICHARD HARCLERODE, EDITOR JUNE 1979

# ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT GUIDE FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

## HOW TO IMPROVE STAFF

## ILLNESS ABSENCE

A GROUP OF NEW JERSEY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE JUNE 1979

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies of illness absence of paid public school employees have been recently completed in many states. These studies point up the common nature of illness absence whether in New Jersey, New York, Illinois, California, etc.

A major study in New Jersey sponsored by the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce was completed in the mid-1970's. This study departed from the usual educational document in that it reported not only on the absence data collected but also on the results of successful Attendance Improvement programs in N.J.

Since that time other New Jersey school districts have adopted these programs. The educational press and the news media in the state have given wide coverage to these successful programs.

The nature of these programs and the beneficial consequences were reported on at a N.J. State Board of Education meeting held in November 1978. Following that report an upsurge of interest has been shown by New Jersey as well as other state educators. Indeed the national press picked up this whole subject in their publications this winter and spring.

So much for the preliminaries - what is the Attendance Improvement Program?

## THE PLAN

First let me say that the AIP in 40 New Jersey districts has shown a 19 to 33% annual reduction in sick leave claims by teachers. No teacher has been fired and to our knowledge no grievances have resulted from these programs. District costs to operate this program have been minimal. Most districts are now including non-professional persons in their AIP's.

Interested in more? There are five steps to be taken by the district superintendent to develop a plan.

. Prepare a past year and current year analysis of staff absence. A special form "School Monthly Attendance Summary" can be used for this purpose. This is a form which differentiates all illness absence into two separate groupings - short term (5 days or less) and long term illness for each professional/non professional in a work center (school). A sample is included in the Data Study section of this report.

As records are gathered and summarized, organize the absence material by management and administrative groupings. Analysis can be made of group absence rates: i.e., individual school, special employee groupings, etc. Individual cases which exceed annual days provided by the district should be reviewed.

Preparing this analysis on the School Monthly Attendance Summary assures that basic data gathered can be used for ongoing records as well.

An analysis of this data should be prepared for use by the administrative staff. You may find some of the characteristics found in other districts useful for your analysis:

- The large percentage of personnel - 80% to 90% have rates of illness absence well within the 2 - 4% range experienced in the private sector.
- Districts that provide illness absence protection beyond the ten day N.J. state minimum experience the highest rates of absence.
- A small percentage of personnel - 10% to 20% account for 50% of all illness absence.

- Average teacher absence is comprised of 70% to 80% short term absence (5 days or less). This contrasts marketly with a 20 year private sector study where short term absence accounts for only 44% of all illness absence.

- A wide range of illness rates occurred among different elementary and secondary schools: i.e., the highest rate of absence at one school was double the lowest rate at another similar school.

- Best attendance day in many districts is pay day!

After you complete the analysis of data a superintendent's staff meeting uses this data as the bench mark to prepare local district operating guidelines for principals and other management personnel. Identifying the problem and causes will help determine the probable steps to be taken to reduce excessive illness absence. Prepare a written set of guidelines developed by principals and non-certified managers which will be used to uniformally administer the Attendance Improvement Program. These guidelines should stay within the parameters of the local labor contract and the state law. Consult with other superintendents who have initiated their own AIP. Refer to "A Program to Improve Teacher Attendance" for existing guidelines in pilot districts.[1]

Third, consult with your medical director, attorney, and labor relations specialist for their assistance in developing your local AIP. Consult with your local Chamber Education Committee Chairman (or other appropriate aegis business group) with a professional management consultant, or with the editor for advice before you proceed.

[1] Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, A Program to Improve Teacher Attendance, Newark, N.J. July 1974. pp. 218-219

## An Action Plan

If it is your decision to proceed with an AIP the following steps may be useful to your planning.

1. Superintendent designate someone to be the District Attendance Improvement Officer. AIO should attend Education Improvement Center Workshop on AIP.

2. Perform Data Study

   Use data form reviewed at workshop.
   Throughout this school year post monthly data.

   Determine monthly % for all work centers and for the district. Provide this info to superintendent only.

3. In June-July prepare an analysis of this data.

4. Hold staff meeting in July-August (prior to school opening)

   Review data analysis.
   Have principals/directors develop guidelines under superintendent's direction.

5. Initiate AIP in Sept.

| | 1979 | | | | 1980 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sept. | Oct... | Jan... | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
| Desig AIO | | | X | | | | |
| Data Study Start | | | X | | | | |
| Data Analysis | | | | X | X | | |
| Staff Meeting | | | | | | X | |
| Initiate AIP | | | | | | | X |

Next, lay out the timing for implementation. Ask that modern methods be used to regularly gather, summarize, use and distribute this data. Be clear and keep simple the monthly records you as superintendent need. Insist that existing data collecting systems be used wherever possible. Of course, exercise the opportunities to apply the principles of work simplification. Do not destroy any existing individual records procedures. Generally avoid mechanization until you

know what your experience will be. Refer to the monthly summary on a regular basis at staff meetings.

Last, be the plan's exponent, sell it, and initiate the plan using and insisting that careful managerial control be maintained so that the positive nature of the plan occurs. Advising teacher association and other union leaders of your work is an excellent step to take. This will assure understanding and in most cases support of what you are undertaking.

## THE DATA STUDY

The group measurement device used is a modified School Monthly Attendance Summary which contains employee records of illness absence and arranges these for a work-unit report, i.e., a school. Basic illness absence information is gathered from district records. Following is an example of the form recommended for a data study. The special items of information are suggestive, not required. This record has a dual function in that it provides the basis for a data study and it provides an ongoing School Monthly Attendance Summary.

SCHOOL MONTHLY ATTENDANCE SUMMARY/DATA STUDY

MONTHLY RECORD OF ILLNESS ABSENCE

WORK CENTER _____

YEAR OF STUDY 19__ 19 __

RECORD OF TIMES/DAYS ILLNESS ABSENCE SEP ... _____ AUG

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR DATA ANALYSIS (SOME EXAMPLES)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| # SCHEDULED WORK DAYS | 15 | ... _____ |
| (-) EMERGENCY DAYS | - | ... _____ |
| # ACTUAL WORK DAYS | 15 | ... _____ |
| # STAFF INCL IN REPORT | 30 | ... _____ |

| PERSONNEL ID | AGE* | SEX* | RES. IN DIST OUT | PAST YEAR ILL ABS | CUM LEAVE BEGIN YEAR | NON TENURE | | SEP. | OCT. | NOVØ | ... JULY | AUG. | TOTAL YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i.e., Smith, R.Z. | 55 | M | IN | 1-1 | | | INCIDENTAL | - | - | 2-3 | - | - | 2-3 |
| | | | | 2-30 | 138 | | EXTENDED | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | INCIDENTAL | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | EXTENDED | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | INCIDENTAL | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | EXTENDED | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | INCIDENTAL | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | EXTENDED | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | TOTALS | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | INCIDENTAL | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | EXTENDED | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | TOTAL | | | | | | |

13

* Special items of information for illustrative purposes
Ø Data posted indicates employee was absent two times for a total of three days

14

Data should be totaled monthly. Illness for each work center should be expressed as a percentage. As an example:

| | | Sept. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Incidental Days<br>Total Work Days x Staff (15x30) | Say | 27<br>450 | X 100 = | 6.0% |
| Total Extended Days<br>Total Work Days X Staff (15x30) | Say | 0<br>450 | X 100 = | 0% |
| Total Illness absence | | | | 6.0% |

A continuation of this process will provide an analysis of monthly illness absence at a work center. The analysis of short term (incidental) absence is the most meaningful. Management studies show that this type of claim can be reduced. The reduction occurs as the district management team follows the district guidelines. The following data example looks at incidental absence for patterns and trends:

| | Incidental Absence Year 1978-79 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| % Illness Absence | 1.3 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 4.0 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 4.5 |
| Cumulative | | 1.6 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.4 |

Cumulative rates are sums of monthly rates averaged. As an example, Dec. cumulative rate is the sum of 1.3 + 1.9 + 2.4 + 4.0 = 9.6 divided by the number of months 4 = 2.4. This is a simple procedure which provides comparable results for each unit.

What pattern do you see? As you look for causes of high and low rates, summarize the special information portion of this Data Summary. Are there correlations you can find?

Most of the extended illness absence cases are under professional medical attention. These are cases which should be followed professionally by the board's medical director. In these cases management guidelines should follow any recommendation of this physician.

## RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES

### 1. POLICY

One of the important steps taken was the development in one district of a policy for staff attendance:

> "The Board recognizes that good attendance is necessary and expected in order to maintain an efficient school system. Therefore, the board encourages its employees to develop satisfactory attendance performance in pursuance of that goal."

### 2. DISTRICT GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPALS

District superintendents should obtain staff assistance from school principals and non-certified management personnel in developing a set of district operating procedures to be followed. These cover the responsibilities of the principal and of the various departments of the school; office of the superintendent, personnel office, medical department, legal, and labor relations. Twenty-six statements from two school districts are included in the "Program to Improve Teacher Attendance Report".[2]

### 3. CALENDAR -

Districts should consider the use of a four-year single sheet calendar record for all employees. Maintenance of this record by each building principal and work unit supervisor provides valuable information about staff illness absence. Comprehensive analysis of individual absence trends can be readily made. Districts may use this as the form for individual appraisal of staff members' attendance and tardiness.

[2]Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, Program to Improve Teacher Attendance, Newark, N.J. July 1974, pp. 218-219

## ILLNESS, TARDINESS
## SABBATICAL, PERSONAL, AND VACATION RECORD

Name _____ Social Security No. _____

School _____ Employee Position _____

Absence Times _____ Days _____ Tardiness _____

**1978 - 79**

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JULY | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ AUG. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ SEPT. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 30 | 31 | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ OCT. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ NOV. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ DEC. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | . | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | . | . | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 31 | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JAN. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ FEB. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ MAR. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | . | . | . | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ APR. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ MAY | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JUNE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 29 | 30 | . | . | . | . | . | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

Absence Times _____ Days _____ Tardiness _____

**1979 - 80**

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JULY | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ AUG. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ SEPT. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | . | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 30 | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ OCT. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ NOV. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ DEC. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | . | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JAN. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ FEB. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ MAR. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | . | . | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | . | . | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | . | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 30 | 31 | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

| Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ APR. | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ MAY | | | | | | | Times Abs ___ Tardy ___ JUNE | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | . | . | . | . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | . | . | . | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 29 | 30 | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |
| . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . |

KEY:
- 0 – Illness Absence
- // – Tardiness
- X – Personal Days
- • – Sabbatical Leave
- □ – Other Causes
- ⌀ – Half Day Illness
- # – Vacation
- _____ Absence Over Five Days

4. DATA COLLECTING

A. School Attendance Payroll Report -

A multi-purpose payroll and substitute audit form can be used in each school at the time of payroll preparation to report all staff absence by date, reason and by substitute replacement. A copy of this record can be used to post the School Monthly Attendance Summary.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Teacher Absence Report

School _____

Teacher _____

| Name | Date | Reason | Substitute |
|---|---|---|---|

_____ School Clerk

_____ Principal

A = Illness, B = School Duties, C = Personal,
D = Death in Family

B. Monthly School and District Illness Absence Summary

Each work center should post information on this form. The form would be completed by a school clerk. One copy of the form would be forwarded to the central location (The place designated by the Attendance Improvement Officer) for district summary.

The District totals of items would be the addition of items 1 thru E.

District percents would need to be calculated from the sum of each similar work location.

## MONTHLY SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ILLNESS ABSENCE SUMMARY

WORK CENTER: _____ EMPLOYEE GROUP: _____ SUPERVISOR: _____ MONTH/YEAR _____

| ITEM | | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG | AVE SEPT-AUG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Employees Assigned to Payroll | 10 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Number of Employees Absent Current Month | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Number of School Days Current Month | 20 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Employee Monthly Workdays (1 X 3) | 200 | 200 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Cumulative Workdays | 200 | 400 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A | Total Monthly Absence, 5 Days or Less | 10 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B | Cumulative Absence, 5 Days or Less | 10 | 30 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C | Number of Employees on Extended Leave, 6 or More Days | - | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| D | Total Monthly Absence, 6 Days or More | - | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | Cumulative Absence, 6 Days or More | - | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F | % Absence, 5 Days or Less * | 5.0 | 10.0 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| G | Cumulative % Absence, 5 Days or Less * * | 5.0 | 7.5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| H | % Absence, 6 Days or more ∅ | - | 10.0 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I | Cumulative % Absence, 6 Days or More ∅ | - | 10.0 | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Formula $\frac{A}{4} \times 100$ ∅ Formula $\frac{H}{4}$

** Formula $\frac{B}{5} \times 100$ ∅ Formula $\frac{I}{5}$

_____
NAME & PHONE NUMBER OF PERSON COMPLETING REPORT

C. School Monthly Attendance Summary

A special form can be designed to show monthly school-by-school record of individual teacher absence. This is the basic record needed to analyse district absence patterns. Its continued use forms the basis of ongoing data for management purposes. This is an abbreviation of the form used for the data study.

SCHOOL MONTHLY ATTENDANCE SUMMARY
MONTHLY RECORD OF ILLNESS ABSENCE

WORK CENTER _____
RECORD OF TIMES/DAYS ABSENCE

1977-78 1978-79 Days

| Employee Name | | Times | Days | Sep. | Oct. | ...Aug. | Tot. | "P" | "B" | "SL" |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Incidental | | | | | | | | | |
| | Extended | | | | | | | | | |
| | Incidental | | | | | | | | | |
| | Extended | | | | | | | | | |



P = Personal, B = Business, SL = Sick Leave Days Remaining

E. District Illness Absence Analysis

This monthly report summarizes percent illness absence by administrative unit. A district monthly and cumulative analysis of incidental (5 days or less), extended (more than 5 days), and total absence are also shown. This monthly single sheet report is the basic management reporting document. Its monthly preparation is required so that all district management are informed of absence results.

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DISTRICT ILLNESS ABSENCE ANALYSIS

Total Monthly Absence — Monthly & Cumulative District Results Feb 1979

| School | Name or Special Grouping | Mon Inc | Cum Inc | Mon Ext | Cum Ext | Mon Tot | Cum Tot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| El#1 | Professional | 1.2 | 2.2 | 0 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 3.2 |

5. INTERNAL RECOGNITION

An internal news letter, personal letter, and in-person acknowledgement can be used to recognize the many individual cases of excellent staff attendance.

Districts which do not recognize the many individuals having good attendance records may be seen by those persons as ignoring their excellent records.

Good attendance is recognized as a visible sign of generally good working conditions and good employee intrinsic motivation.

6. REVIEW OF LABOR CONTRACTS BOARD POLICY MANUALS

Districts may find they need to adjust provisions of their labor contracts or board policy manuals which are contrary to state law or to good management systems.

These adjustments should be made in bargaining talks and/or in consultation with Association leadership.

7. STANDARD MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

Districts can developed a standard medical certificate through the Superintendent's staff.[3] This certificate should provide the medical director with the necessary medical information for all extended illness cases. Concerns for privacy, legality, and propriety should be jointly reviewed by the Attorney and Medical Director.

[3] Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, Program to Improve Teacher Attendance Newark, N.J. July 1974, p. 205.

## CAUSES OF ILLNES ABSENCE

Illness absence is, of course, caused by illness. A person feels ill and reports off ill.

However, there are conditions which may cause some individuals to claim illness when that is not the case. Perhaps listing some will simplify some of the causes for illness absence claims which are really not illness related:

Preemployment failure
Management inattention
District failure to adhere to state plan
District unfamiliarity with the Commissioner's Controversies & Disputes, State Board, and Superior Court Decisions.
Employee misunderstanding of sick leave plan
Adverse working conditions
Low morale & intrinsic motivation
Poor personnel practices
Low recognition - responsibility & work itself emphasis

Each of these items has a common cause -

MANAGEMENT FAILURE!

In the pre-employment phase, does management talk about the importance of staff attendance.

Is the sick leave plan clearly stated and understood? To care for "...absence ...of any person because <u>of personal disability</u> due to illness or injury..."[4]

Many staff persons have excellent records. In one district nearly 25% of the employees have perfect attendance. Yet there were no programs to recognize this outstanding event. People who have such records and whose performance is ignored must feel unimportant. Some with not such good records feel that no one really cares.

Does the district have a working familiarity with the state and local sick leave plan? Does it police itself so that the plan follows the intent and spirit of the regulations?

In New Jersey there are some excellent published Commissioner, State Board, and Superior Court decisions - Totowa, Hamilton, Woodbridge, Ramsey and Woodcliff Lake. Be sure you and your attorney are familiar with the principals of these key cases.

[4]NJRS 18A:30-1

If management fails to describe the sick leave plan as an insurance to employees, employees can misunderstand the reason for sick leave. Management must convey the reason for sick leave with a clear and consistent position.

Often when staff persons do not have good basic working conditions, staff illness absence may be high. Such things as unsafe parking, advisory persons in classrooms, student vandalism and disorder, unsupportive school administrators, etc., can adversely affect working conditions and teacher morale.

Teachers as a group and many of the non-certified personnel are highly motivated to work. Where a low morale condition exists correct it and you will correct excessive illness claim rates.

Inconsistent personnel practices - treating persons differently, ignoring real problems etc. are sure causes for high illness claims.

Last a failure to follow the modern psychological motivators can lead to high absenteeism. If these motivators are used and used well, a direct pay off is seen in improved morale, satisfying work, and reduced illness claims.

## WHY SHOULD YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT HAVE A PLAN TO IMPROVE PERSONNEL ATTENDANCE?

There are five answers to this question.

First, the educational problems which excessive illness absence breeds can be reduced. Substitutes seldom provide service equal to or superior to the regular teacher or non-certified employee. Absence causes an educationally unsound and unanticipated interruption in the continuity of the educational process. Administrative efforts needed to provide teacher substitutes require a huge expenditure of time to secure the substitute, orient the substitute to school routines, and guide them in their instructional/or non-instructional duties. Absence from the class is a poor example to students. Creditability is lost where teachers and other staff advocate improved student attendance yet demonstrate otherwise themselves.

Second, absence replacement is expensive and excessive absence is excessively expensive. Where illness rates exceed the 2-4% range of the U.S. private sector, excess costs will occur. As rates of absence are reduced a proportionate reduction in substitute and overtime costs occur. These savings become cumulative as the program continues.

Third, success in reducing costs and increasing educational benefits requires a plan using the most modern psychologically based personnel practices. Use of these practices is beneficial to the total operation of a school or school service.

A fourth reason is the positive psychological benefits that are outcomes of a successful plan. Staff morale is enhanced since the plan was created by the local school management team and initiated through their own efforts. Staff persons see that good records are recognized and that consistant efforts are taken to encourage good staff attendance. Superintendents look good as a result of leading in the creation of a non-punitive positive plan to improve personnel attendance. The plan has a high receptivity resulting from its positive vs. punitive nature. There are no clubs or chains in the plan.

Lastly, districts having a plan need not fear the intrusion of an absence control plan imposed by outside forces. The adverse outcomes of excessive and chronic illness absence are news worthy items which have become local issues in the media. Media inspired issues can cause public rather than professional solutions to internal personnel problems.